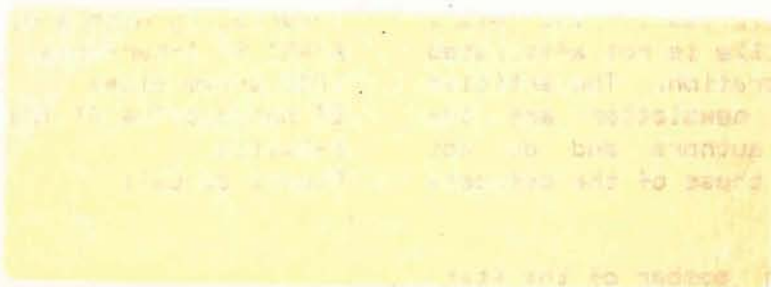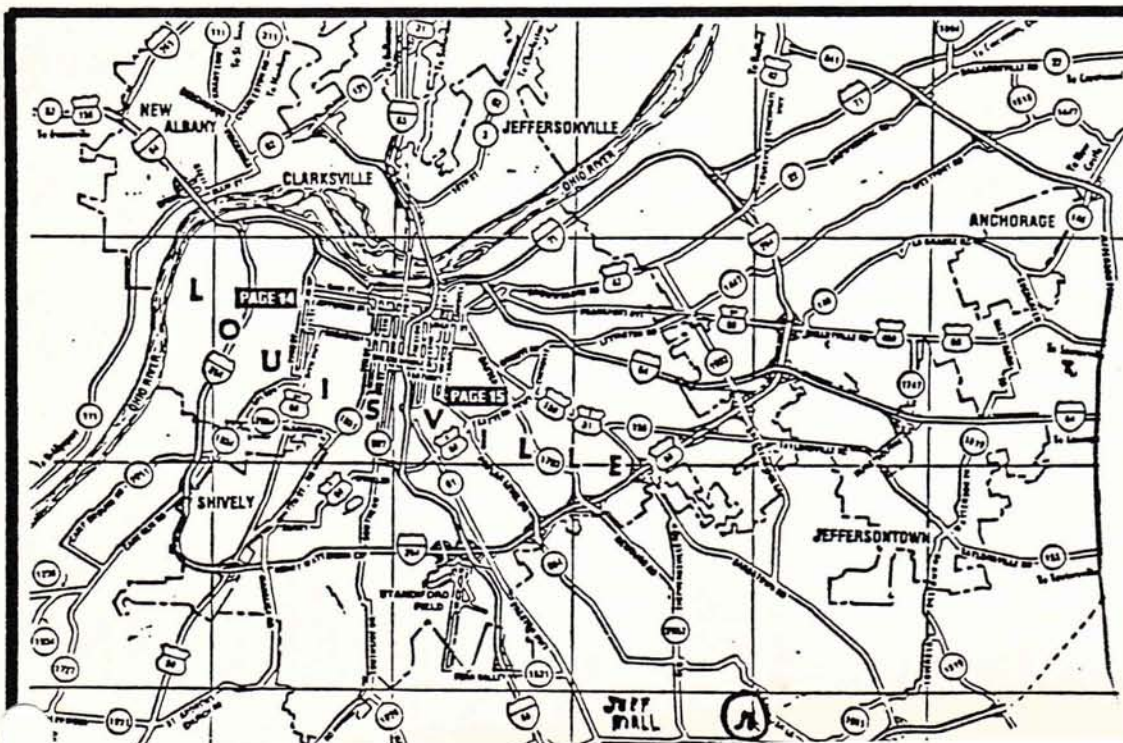# AELien
TRANSMISSIONS

The Information Exchange Newsletter of the Atari Exchange of Louisville

J U L Y   1 9 8 7

ATARI
EXCHANGE
OF
LOUISVILLE
P.O. BOX 34183
LOUISVILLE
KENTUCKY
4 0 2 3 2

BUSINESS MEETING

Jefferson County
Government Center
7201 Outer Loop

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            DISCLAIMER          =
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Any dues paying member of the Atari Exchange of Louisville may submit an article to the editor for publication. The deadline for submission is the last Sunday of each month. Articles may be edited and/or published at the discretion of the editor. Mail all articles to Bobby Jackson, 3811 Darlene Drive, Louisville, KY 40216 or submit via modem to the Atari Exchange of Louisville's ATARI SCENE BBS 502-964-2924. Atariwriter or Atariwriter+ format is preferable.

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=          Business Meeting            =
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The Business Meeting for the Atari Exchange of Louisville is held on the 2nd Saturday of each month at the Central Jefferson County Government Center, 7201 Outer Loop, Louisville, KY. The library opens for returns at 11:00am and the meeting begins at 11:30am. Dues for one year are $20.00 per person/family. Membership includes monthly issues of the AELien Transmissions Newsletter (not mailed), access to the AEL software library and privileged access to our Atari Scene BBS.

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Officers of Atari Exchange of Louisville

President: Don Garr

VP-Coordination: Jay Hagan

VP-Membership: Jerry Badger

Treasurer: Whitie Vance

Secretary: Jack Link

Librarian: Paul Moore

Public Domain Librarian: Lloyd Bromwell

Newsletter Editor: Bobby Jackson

BBS Sys-Op: Paul Jones

Contributors this month:
    Charles Crowder
    Don Garr
    Bobby Jackson
    Jack Link

AELien TRANSMISSIONS

President's Viewpoint

This month should prove to be an interesting meeting at the AEL. Our monthly topic is interfaces, as you will see throughout this newsletter, and I plan on demonstrating a Roland JX-3P electronic synthesizer connected thru the Midi port to a 520ST. If that's not enough for you, July is also the month to determine the destiny of the Atari Exchange of Louisville. Elections will be held to select the officers who will lead the AEL for another year. We are reaching an important time in our history. Our membership is steadily dropping off. In the past two years I have seen it dwindle from 120 to approximately 90. The number of people willing to step forward and volunteer to help out have also seemed to dwindle. We are loosing people to the larger more expensive systems and I am at a loss as to how to keep the AEL growing.

The prices of the Big Blue clones are at the same price now as the Atari 800 was when it first came out. Maybe even slightly less. So those folks who could afford a $1000.00 system, five years ago, can now afford systems which offer the availability of more software and larger applications. If anyone has any ideas of how to help improve the AEL meetings I'm sure all of the officers would be tickled pink to hear about it. We've tried improving the newsletter, coming up with themes for each month, expanding the BBS, developing three separate SIGs and offering more and more services. I'm really at a loss of what more we can do.

For only $20.00 per year, members receive all of these benefits plus all the news that is news about the Atari community. Maybe I'm just caught up in being a true patriot of the club but I really believe in supporting it. I spend a lot more than $20.00 a year for things that are of a lot less benefit to me than the Atari Exchange of Louisville. Some of the cheapest programs you can buy cost more than that. I believe the AEL is one of my best investments.

Back on the more positive side, I went and borrowed a Roland JX-3P synthesizer from a friend today. I started messing with it earlier and am already able to do almost nothing with it. Don't expect a whole lot at the meeting but do expect to hear some decent sounds produced from Music Studio, a music disk and a $500.00 Atari. Music Studio's preprogrammed voices are set up for the lesser expensive Casio synthesizers but I can still produce some impressive music. The family has had a blast today listening to all the different songs in different synthesizer voices. Who knows maybe I'll even learn a few things in the next couple of weeks.

I've read some impressive things about the Atari and Midi devices. One of our correspondent newsletters had an article by a professional who uses the Atari as a sequencer instead of using large expensive sequencers designed specifically for that task. From the April 1987 issue of Current Notes, Grant Slawson says the Atari and Dr. T's Keyboard Controlled Sequencer is a Ferrari and the Yamaha QX-21 and Korg SQD-1 are Pinto's. He also says that this combination gives him more flexibility than a 24 track recorder. He can even edit passages already recorded that could not be done with regular tape.

Another interesting point about the Atari is that it is apparently going to become a standard in desktop publishing.

It's not there yet, but it should be coming. The Atari ST, Publishing Partner and the Atari $1500.00 laser printer should drive it's competitors nuts. An entire Atari desktop publishing system, which would produce practically typesetters results, will cost roughly $2200.00 verses roughly $5500.00 for a currently comparable system. One article I read pitted the Publishing Partner program against any of the Macintosh desktop publishing programs. He says he was very impressed with the power of the Atari/Publishing Partner combination. I own the program and must agree. The only complaint I have is that at the present the output on a dot matrix printer is not what I had hoped for. That is supposed to be improved when Atari completes GDOS. Hurry up Atari.

See you at the meeting. Happy computing.

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=          Editor's Corner           =
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This is the end of my year and the new officer will step in if I don't win this time. I'd like to thank you for a GREAT year. The newsletter is going in a good direction as we have new stuff each month. If I was elected again, I would think about working on some more newsletter ideas. Some are:

An online version for AEL members

The new disk version (which never got of the first time)

More pages even thought 14 is the limit

Well this may be the last time I will be here in the writer's circle.

                    Once again
                    Thanks

                    Bobby Jackson

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=========================================
=     AEL Business Meeting Minutes   =
=          June 13, 1987             =
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by Jack Link

You could feel the tension in the air as Don called the meeting to order. What was causing so much anxiety for our members this month? Why it must be time for nominations of officers. Horrors not again!

Don began the meeting with a much unexpected presentation of plaques to several of the members who contributed to the enhancement of the club over the past year. I am sure the recipients will treasure them for many years to come.

NOMINATIONS

The following members were nominated for the designated offices:

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BBS Sysop----------Rich Link
PD Librarian-------Lloyd Bromwell
Librarian----------Dan Stallings
                   Bill Miller
Newsletter Editor--Jack Link
                   Robert Jackson
Treasurer----------Whitie Vance
Secretary----------Jody Estes
VP Membership------Jerry Badger
VP Coordination----Don Garr
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As can be seen, no one has offered to run as President and many of the offices have only one person running. Now is the time to get the most out of your club membership by being an officer.

Don and I gave a brief talk about the trip to Cin'tari the previous month. The subject soon turned to rumors and opinions of Atari's support for 8-bit machines. It was also noted that ANTIC magazine told the MACE club in Michigan to remove ANTIC published programs from their BBS. There seems to be a lot of confusion over what is right and wrong in this area.

The members voted to purchase the following software programs for th library; LAZY PADDLES for the 8-bits and REGENT BASE for the ST.

Jay Hagan gave a talk on FILEMANAGER 800, a database program for the 8-bit line. Lloyd Bromwell did a comparison between SYNFILE+ and FILEMANAGER 800. Yours truly gave an overview of ZOOMRACKS II while Don Garr demonstrated his latest creations with dBMan on the ST.

With no further business to attend to, the library was opened and Irene Moore did a fantastic job with the library in Paul's absence.

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=       ATARI Hardware Update          =
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Taken from Z-MAG 58
By:Ed Chop

Did you know that Atari made two 1050 drives? The newer drives are Tandon drives and the older drives are WST (World Storage Technologies). It seems that the WST drives are quieter and more reliable, but the belts are more expensive. The WST drives are generally not marked as to manufacturer, but they have NOVACON motors.

What about these cheap SD drives you see advertised in Computer Shopper all the time? Can you use them on your Atari? Well....yes ....and no. You can't use them without modifying the drive or your computer.

By adding a microprocessor and interface circuits to the drive, you could probably get it to work with your Atari just like a 1050. But an easier way may be to take the mechanical drive assembly from the cheap drive and wire it to the 1050 electronics. And why go through all this trouble? Because the cheap drive that you want to buy should be gear-driven. They are MUCH quieter and reliable. According to Bob Wooley, from the Compuserve Atari Sig Community, the drive must be one that draws less power than the original. Bob says that you may burn up your driver transistors, although he hasn't tried it himself, yet.

Another way would be to add a PIO to your computer. That's a parallel I/O adapter. Mmmmmmmm....sounds interesting, huh? Well it seems our friend Bob Wooley is working on such a project. The PIO board will plug into the PIO port in the XL with a 24" cable. The information for building the PIO will be available on the Atari Sig when he has it completed. By adding the proper controller chip to the PIO, you can run the new drive with your Atari. But Bob has a better idea. How about a parallel 1050 drive that can load a disk in 10 seconds? Got your attention, huh? Well, he has an interface card planned that will plug into the PIO to run your 1050. That, too, will be available on the Atari Sig. We'll be looking forward to that hardware project.

What's Atari doing to enhance their drives? Well, to start with, Bill Wilkinson is working on a new DOS called A-DOS. Although originally planned for the promised 3.5 inch disk, now scrapped, A-DOS is being designed for a new DD 5.25" drive from Atari.

Topic of the Month
INTERFACES


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=              The MIO                 =
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Taken from Z-MAG 31
Reprinted from MID-MICHIGAN ATARI MAGAZINE by permission.

REVIEW: MIO Board by ICD
by Jerry Cross (GAG)

Several months ago, I had the chance to attend the Summer Consumer Electronics Show. I happened to get there early, and had planned to scan the products in the computer area before going on to other more important displays like the X-rated video section next door.

Not much was happening at the time, and I stumbled across a small booth inside of the huge ATARI area with a guy from ICD standing there. Sitting on his cramped

table was a small box connected to an Atari XE. The ICD man said it was their new product, a combination of all the things us Atari folks have been looking for. It was called the MIO (Multi-Input/Output) board.

To many of you, the MIO may be old news... despite the fact that they have only in the last month or so been actually available. Nevertheless, to bring the few of you up to speed: "The MIO is one incredible package" It has an RS-232 port for your modems or other serial peripherals and uses the same set-up as the P:R Connection, only a bit improved. Also included is a printer port, and a plug for an as yet unavailable 80-column board.

It also has a hard drive interface that works with any SCSI/SASI protocol hard drive. The hard drive must have it's own controller card for it to work. According to Supra, their hard drive should work just fine.

The MIO also has a built-in ramdisk. There are two sizes, 256k or 1 Meg. The entire ramdisk area is configurable; you can divide it up into several different size drives from 32k to 960k, or just make one large ramdisk. The software even allows you to configure the MIO to boot right from the ramdisk instead of a floppy.

You can configure a printer spooler (a buffer to collect your printing data and release your computer to do other things while it prints) to whatever size you want (up to 256k).

The MIO plugs into your computer using the parallel plug located in the back. This allows for super fast disk access and still allows you to hook up other drives too. If you are using an XE computer, you must purchase an adapter (about $20) since the XE uses the cartridge port as part of its expansion port.

Well, I was sold even at the CES! I eventually tore myself away from the ICD display to check out the video section, but a few months later, I finally my 1-meg MIO board and ran it through the

tests. The first thing I noticed was the excellent documentation that comes with it. If you are new to computers, this takes you through all you need to know with few headaches. More experienced users will not even need to look at the docs. The built in software is menu driven and very user friendly.

The software resides on an EPROM inside the MIO. So what? Well, ICD had taken some of it's past experiences into consideration and has set up a plan to exchange future hardware modifications for only a token fee. The EPROM can be easily removed and replaced. Simply send ICD $15 and they will send you the new EPROM. When you return the old chip ICD will return $5 to you. This way you don't have to go without your MIO while your chips are in the mail, and the end cost is $10.

Since the software is resident in the MIO, it takes no memory in the computer. Once configured, it stays in memory within the MIO. Also, the MIO comes with it's own power source. You can turn off your computer and the ramdisk stays intact.

About the only thing I don't like about the MIO is the very short cable. It is only about 3 inches to prevent interference, and the MIO must sit directly behind the computer. The footprint is about the size of a disk drive, but is only 1 inch high. If you have a cramped working space, this will really cause a problem. Also, because of the heat generated by the board, you can not set anything on top of it or you will cause some problems with the ventilation.

Another bad mark goes for the lack of the addition of Sparta-Dos. The first thing you read in the manual is they strongly recommend the use of Sparta-Dos with the MIO. Most DOS's do not support such large amounts of memory, and others I have tested acted funny. So why can't they throw in a copy for free? Remember all of those US Doublers, Rambo's, and R-Time cartridges you purchased that came with Sparta-Dos? If you do not already have a copy of Sparta-Dos, expect to order one right away, and at a cost of aroun. $40.

The modem port has an improved version of the P:R: software. Some of the bugs that prevented you from using certain terminal programs have been fixed, and will now run without modification. Some of the programs tested include Hometerm, Express, R-Scope, Omniterm, and Backtalk.

The MIO also responds to the XIO configuration commands, so you can control all the ports or change configurations from Basic.

The documentation does a very good job in describing the interface, and lists a number of hard drives by manufacturers that are compatible with the MIO. As mentioned earlier, you must have a controller built in to the drive or you will have to supply one. Some hard drives have controllers built in and can be recognized by a 50 pin SASI/SCSI interface on the drive itself. Most commonly found hard drive do NOT have controllers built in. These drives are characterized by a 34 pin and 20 pin edge connector.

In order to operate this class of drives, you need a SASI or SCSI interface controller card (NOT an IBM compatible type!). These controllers have a 34 pin edge connecter and several dual rows of 10 pins on one side and a 50 pin SASI/SCSI connector on the other end. Tom Harker at ICD said in a phone conversation in mid-November that they would sell a SASI controller through ICD since many people have asked for them after failing to find them available locally. He expects to have them by the time you read this for around $135.

The MIO can be updated to allow the networking of hard drives. This will allow up to 8 MIOs and 8 hard drives to be connected along the same cable and communicate with the same drive concurrently. This enables several systems to share the same programs and data. The cost for this upgrade is $50.

DOWNLOAD FROM ICD

P:R: Connection Information

Now you're no longer limited to 'Atari Only' printers and modems. The P:R: Connection is a flexible alternative to the Atari 850 interface. Suddenly hundreds of printers and modems become compatible with your Atari. You can even share the same printer and modem with your ST or IBM PC.

The P:R: Connection plugs directly into the serial (disk drive) port of any 8 bit Atari and provides the user with a standard 'centronics' printer port and two RS-232 type serial ports. It also draws its power from your computer which means one less cord fighting for an outlet, while its compact size leaves your work space virtually clutter-free. The P:R: Connection's serial ports resemble those of the 850 interface, posessing the same signals and functions and using a fully compatible built in R: handler. Why not make your connection the right connection...with our Connection!

P:R: Connecter

"The P:R: Connecter....A sensible alternative to the 850 interface!"

It may look just like an ordinary cable...but don't let its simplistic styling fool you! This little dynamo has its electronics built right into the cable end and it possesses the power of compatibility....printer compatibility (compatible with all 'centronics' parallel printers). With the Printer Connection, you're no longer limited to 'Atari Only' printers.

So, for you adventurous Atari owners who dare to explore the world of printers...this one's for you!

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=      Interfacing with a Nightmare      =
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by Don Garr

After finally purchasing my 800XL on sale, for more than I care to mention or remember, I had no more money left and only needed two more items... immediately! There would be other peripherals that I would want later on but I just had to have a disk drive and a printer NOW!

Owning my computer and 410 cassette recorder for only three days I discovered that I had an interest in basic programming. To be able to do it right would require a reliable storage device and a way to print my programs, riddled with mistakes, to paper so I could study all of the wrong ways to do it. You see I always learn what not to do first, so I start out doing nothing right. This makes for horrendous troubleshooting.

A friend of mine came to my aid selling me a used, older style, single-sided/single-density, non-enhanceable Percom disk drive for $280.00 and ordering me a Citoh Prowriter ("built to withstand the test of time") printer for $330.00. Then he told me that in order to use the printer, I would be receiving in a few days, I would have to have... the dreaded, troublesome INTERFACE! He recommended the Atari 850 as being the best but also the most expensive. After what I had already spent I was going to be in debt forever so I needed to go for something on the slightly cheaper side. He then recommended the Ape Face because it was graphics compatible.

I had several interfaces to choose from, the Ape Face, the Atari 850 and two models of MPP (Micro Peripheral Products) interfaces. After checking over the different units, and the empty spot left in my wallet, I chose the MPP 1150 Plug'n Print interface. Some of my reasons were that the Plug'n Print:

1. Didn't need a power supply
    because it operated from the
    computers I/O port 5 volts;

2. Was very easy to install because

it was only a cable with one end being the familiar I/O connector and the other being a large centronics connector housing the electronics;

3. Had the reputation of MPP behind
    it, which I was unfamiliar with
    but was told should be worth
    something;

4. Was the CHEAPEST I found!

Well I purchased that MPP interface for $69.95 and in a couple of days when my printer arrived, I set the road on fire between my house and my friend's house. Visions of all the basic programs I was going to print out and correct were dancing in my head. I was more excited than a young Californian with his first bottle of hair bleach.

When I stumbled through the front door carrying my new printer I'll bet it didn't take 5 minutes to hook everything up. Tah-dah... NOTHING! I tried everything I could think of. Talking about disappointments.

The next day I took my interface back to Video Visions and they gladly replaced it. They were really great throughout the whole thing. As soon as I got home from work I immediately tried again, and failed again. Could it be that I had a defective computer... or a defective printer... or another defective interface? What's your guess?

The next day I again went back to Video Visions and took my interface and printer. We tested my interface with the stores printer and proved it defective. Then we found a good interface and tested it with my printer to be absolutely sure. I took it home and everything finally worked, and continued to for about 6-9 months.

Then one day, not doing anything different, I powered up the system and my disk drive wouldn't work. I thought I was going to panic. I disconnected one thing at a time and when I disconnected my printer everything started working. I then plugged the interface alone and my

disk drive went out to lunch again. The interface was still under manufacturer's warranty so I mailed it to MPP to be repaired. Being without a printer was a real problem so I was very anxious to get it back. About 10 days later I got a letter back explaining that MPP went out of business and it's employee's took over forming the company of Supra. They could not honor my warranty but would repair the unit for $10.00. I responded giving them authorization and sending a check for repairs and shipping expense.

It took about 3 weeks to receive my repaired interface and it did work perfectly again... for about a year and a half this time. When it blew up the last time, taking out my disk drive again, I didn't bother having it repaired. What's the since? It'll just go out sometime in the future. I am currently in the process of building an Atari 850. I'd like to have something I can depend on. I hate undependable products.

The morale of the story is, "Watch out for those CHEAPEST products and stick with something having a dependable history". Still without an 8 bit printer...

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***********************************************
*          Atari ST Interfaces          *
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by Charles E. Crowder Jr.
ASTRO SIG Contributing Editor

Well, I have been asked by the Editor of the newsletter to write an article that will go along with the July topic of interfaces for Atari computers. Although most people have thought of the Atari 8-bits as little more than glorified "game machines", the real truth of the matter is that they have had many different types of interfaces available for them, ranging from the Atari 850 interface through ones that could control laser discs and industrial robots.

The Atari ST continues this fine tradition with wide assortment of various industry standard interfaces built into the case of the machine. Arranged along the back of the system are:

(1) RS-232c port
(2) MIDI port
(3) Parallel port
(4) DMA port
(5) Cartridge port
(6) Mouse/Joystick ports

As you can see, the ST offers many options to the user. Both the RS-232c and Parallel port are standardized after the "IBM" standard, thus cables for them are readily available and affordable. Both of my cables cost $16. Compare this with the $25 for the Atari 850 interface modem cable and $40 for the printer cable.

The MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a standard from the entertainment industry where it has gained dominance. The ST is the first (and only at the time of this writing) personal computer to offer this standard built into the system. This allow the ST to control any MIDI capable sythnesizer (keyboard, drum,etc) and play some very good music. The ST has found a wide acceptance in the music industry because of this. So much so, that the new Commodore Amiga 2000 will also include it built into the console.

A little digression is in order at this point. Those who were around during the time between the Tramiels purchase of the nearly bankrupt Atari and the introduction of the ST's at the January '85 CES will remember that they were to have had the AMY sound chip as the sound component of the system. When the AMY failed to materialize, the Yamaha chip became the ST's on-board sound generator and the MIDI ports were introduced to allow more advanced uses of the system. In fact, MIDI can used for many things. There are networking systems, and an interactive game available even as I write for the ST MIDI ports with more to come.

The other ports available on the ST are more system specific. The DMA (Direct Memory Access) port allows for connecting very high speed peripherals such as the Atari SLM-804 Laser Printer, SH204 20meg Hard Disk Drive, etc. Access to the System is direct and has priority over the rest of the system functions. Coupled with the ST's extremely high data transfer speed (one of the highest in the

industry), this allows the peripherals to operate at a very high rate of speed.

The cartridge port is specific to the ST. It allows for large memory cartridges to be plugged into the St for many purposes. Clock cards that set the date and time on boot-up are the main use right now but color video and sound digitizers, laboratory experiment controllers, and many others are available right now with many more coming on-line everyday.

The mouse/joystick ports are the ones familiar to every Atari 8-bit or Commodore 64/128 user. They use the standard set by the old Atari Inc. The standard was flexible enough to allow for use of a mouse. This is really the only area where the ST lags behind the 8-bits. The 8-bits had a bewildering array of joystick port peripherals ranging from the joystick to the paddles, light pen, touch tablet, keypads,etc. They can even use the ST mouse and with a slight adjustment, they can use both mouse buttons. This shows the remarkable forsight the original Atari 400/800 builders had. The ST will aquire it's own array of peripherals for these important access points in the future though,.....so watch out!

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=      1050 DRIVE BLUES            =
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Get a SLOWWWW boot error, or sometimes just can't get the #"!%$&@ thing to read? The most likely problem is NO DISK ROTATION. This can be due to belt problems, a loose flywheel, or insufficient SQUEEZE on the disk.

Diagnosing the belt problem is easy once you open the drive. Just look at what is happening when the motor runs. Sometimes the belt is lying in the bottom of the drive. Sometimes, it looks OK but won't stay on anymore! New belts are hard to find so try buying a small 'O' ring that can replace the belt.

If the flywheel center attaching screw is loose, that's another easy fix.

The hard one to tell about is when the disk just isn't being squeezed enough by the turn-down handle mechanism to grip and turn the disk reliably.

I put a few thicknesses of paper labels under the part that pushes down when the handle is moved to see if it would grip tighter. It worked so well, I haven't gone back into the drive to see if there is another way to increase the grip....but I suppose the paper will wear out someday. Until then...............

Tips Compiled by John Nagy
CHAOS BBS (517) 371-1106

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=            ST HANGOUT                    =
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ST-Transformer Approved!!!....
Taken from ZMAG58
By John Nagy

Darek Mihocka's ATARI 800-in-an-ST-Program will be released with ATARI's approval!

Neil Harris, spokesman for ATARI, has agreed (in a public message on the GEnie ATARI SIG) to allow both USE and DISTRIBUTION of the ATARI code within Darek's emulator. The permission is contingent on Darek's PUBLISHING the SOURCE CODE for his emulator, so that other programmers may be able to add their efforts. Neil says the object of this move is to increase the likelyhood of a truly versatile, full-speed emulator.

As it stands now, the ST TRANSFORMER uses largely custom routines modeled after the ATARI ROM, with some code grafted into the program at startup by a port of the TRANSLATOR DISK (or, in another version, they are already within the emulator program). That's what ATARI had said that Darek could not legally do.

At the BUFFALO ATARIFEST in late April, two user groups showed Darek's "ST TRANSFORMER" in operation. The author sent both the GENESEE ATARI GROUP (G.A.G., Flint, Michigan) and the WESTMORELAND ATARI COMPUTER ORGANIZATION (W.A.C.O.,

North Huntingdon, Pennslyvania) copies of the public domain emulator for demonstration only. Interest at both :ables was brisk despite the uncomplete state of the program and the current slowness of execution (20%-40% "normal" speed depending, on the program). ATARI tried to ignore the demos.

WACO members quizzed ATARI reps over the actual status of the TRANSLATOR, which was sent to all registered user groups for free distribution. Sandy first said that it WAS NOT SENT and remained ATARI'S property, then admitted that she didn't know for sure. At issue was what restrictions (if any) can now be put on the uses of the disks after years of free distribution.

An intriguing facet of the conflict appeared when a program called XLFIX, available for sale in ANTIC MAGAZINE's public domain library, was found to work as well or better than the original ATARI disk. There are several other translators and operating systems available (both in the public domain and commercially - BOSSXL, NEWELL OSN, etc.). It appears :hat ATARI would first have to legally assert ownership and control of ALL the "translators" in order to get any legal claim against Darek for using one or more of them in his 800 emulator.

The dark prospects of long and possibly unsuccessful legal action, together with petition drives, newsletter editorials, and comments running in most major telecommunication services and magazines - all in support of the ST TRANSFORMER - now seem to have gotten through to ATARI.

In May, Neil Harris went on record saying that if Darek would only put his program source code in the public domain for further development by other programmers, then ATARI would give their permission for use and distribution of their operating system.

Darek Mihocka was unwilling to release his source code as public domain, for he would then have given up any rights to his efforts. Fortunately, ATARI softened their position, changing their demand to simply the PUBLISHING of the code, with the rights to his work remaining with the author.

Darek had previously contacted several other major ATARI-interest magazines about the possibility of their publishing the TRANSFORMER and source code in copyrightable form, but was turned down by each. The main reason was ATARI's vocal objection to the project and its legal questions. However, Neil stated in his May 15th messages that ANY magazine would be satisfactory, and that a formal proposal letter of permission would be sent within days. Richard Frick of ATARI called to confirm this on May 20.

Darek will have the consent needed for any interested magazine to publish and and distribute the ATARI ROM with the emulator, as well as any parts of DOS and BASIC that may help. Availability time, publishing timetable, and even which magazine will offer the program can only be guessed at. It is clear that wherever it is printed, ATARI wants no restrictions on distribution (i.e., ANTIC and its "no BBS" rule). Frick indicated that ATARI could influence ANTIC on this issue for this particular program if neccessary.

All the flap hasn't slowed Darek's progress on the continuously developing project. He added SOUND, GTIA graphics, DOS MENUS, JOYSTICK CONTROL, and yes, PLAYER-MISSLE graphics to the already fairly capable emulator. The PLAYER-MISSLE routines were completed and donated by another sympathetic programmer. Speed improvements continue to be made.

Throughout the months of discussion on the subject, Neil Harris and company at ATARI kept asking "Why would anyone want to use 8-bit software on an ST?"... Perhaps a much better question is "WHY NOT?". WACO and other user groups WANT an emulator to provide SOME kind of link, however flawed, between the two products of ATARI CORP.

Distribution of a successful emulator disk by ST dealers might be all some 8-bit owners need to convince them that it is time for a system upgrade or at least assure them that an upgrade in hardware

won't mean an instant loss of 100% of the software they have grown with for years.

Supplied by the CHAOS BBS
(517) 371-1106

[Ed.]
For a more detailed report on this story, Please read the June 1987 issue of Computer Shopper Page 142!

*** Software Review ***

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=     K-Switch from Kuma Software          =
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by Jack Link

Reading the advertisements in Antic's THE CATALOG will have you come across a little tidbit called "K-Switch" by Kuma Software. The basic idea of this program is to divide the memory in a 1040 or upgraded 520 ST into two partitions and allow you to "switch" between them at will. Surprisingly, the program works (with most programs) but not without some expense of available RAM.

K-Switch is a desktop accessory which resides in memory, waiting to be called into action. Clicking on the accessory line will present you with a series of dialog boxes allowing the user to INSTALL or REMOVE K-Switch, to SET or SAVE OPTIONS, to control the installation of both K-Switch and/or its shared ramdisk, and SAVE or LOAD a worksession or ramdisk contents.

At this time I have ST Writer installed in one partition and Flash installed in the other. Since I keep getting the busy signal on the Scene BBS, I guess I will just keep pecking out this review. Should I get an itching to try the Scene again, I just hit three keys at once and I am immediately looking at my last Flash screen. I try to dial thru once more and still encountering a busy, "boom", I hit those same three keys to take me right back to this review.

While this is not true multi-tasking, it is probably the next best thing.

K-Switch allows for the installation of a ramdisk that can be shared between the two partitions. Its size is controllable in the OPTIONS dialog box. You can also save this ramdisk size by saving the installation configuration file.

All this computing fun does come at a price though. I had a usual complement of accessories installed and before calling up K-Switch, 806964 bytes of usable RAM. After loading K-Switch without a sharable ramdisk, each partition had only 279876 bytes of ram remaining. A 100k ramdisk would decrease each partition by 50k. So basically the operation eats up about 240k. One can immediately see that a 1 meg machine is not really enough. Now I lust for at least 3 megabytes.

Because leaving a partition suspends it, the system time in each partition stops while working in the other partition. Though I have not really tried it with that many programs, ZOOMRACKS II is the only program that I have used that locks up the system if installed within a K-Switch partition. Also VIP will not load because of insufficient memory. The documentation is barely adequate but since the program is not that complicated, you eventually figure everything out. Now if I can just run across a "cheap" 4 meg upgrade for this machine, I will be in K-Switch heaven.

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=            Places to Call                =
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AT=ATASCII   A=ASCII

NAME	BAUD		NUMBER
ATARI SCENE:	300/1200	(AT/A)	964-2924
BARGAIN BASEMT:	300/1200	(AT/A)	937-7378
HOTROD'S PIT:	300/450	(AT/A)	459-4452
TRS EXPRESS:	300/1200	(A)	222-0913
TWILIGHT ZONE:	300/1200	(AT/A)	456-4403
5TH PRECINCT:	300/1200	(A)	245-8270
PRECINCT ELITE:	300/1200	(A)	363-6792
FREEBOARD:	300/1200	(A)	584-4162
QUORUM:	300/1200	(A)	944-4487
DECKMAN'S EXCH:	300/1200	(A)	267-7422
OPERATING ROOM:	300/1200	(A)	245-3516